

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDG #2495/01 3061733
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 021733Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9549
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 2114
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0839
RUEHG/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 1023
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2809
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 1155
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4723
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1856
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMISTA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 002495

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/02/2027

TAGS: PHUM ELAB DR

SUBJECT: UN OFFICIALS CITE 'PROFOUND AND ENTRENCHED RACISM'
IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 1859

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Roland W. Bullen, Reasons 1.4(b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The United Nations' Special Rapporteur on racism and Independent Expert on minority issues have concluded a week-long visit to the Dominican Republic, noting that, there is "a profound and entrenched problem of racism and discrimination against such groups as Haitians, Dominicans of Haitian descent, and more generally against blacks within Dominican society." The UN officials urged "the recognition of the reality of racism and discrimination," as well as "the expression of a strong political will at the highest level" to combat the problem. The GDR responded by describing the UN's conclusions as a "prefabricated montage" and alluding to an unspecified "plot" against the country. End summary.

REPORT CITES RACISM

¶2. (U) The United Nations Special Rapporteur on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Doudou Diene, and the UN Independent Expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall, visited the Dominican Republic from October 23-30. During their visit, Diene and McDougall consulted with senior government representatives, members of civil society and community members, academics and students, political parties, the media, and others. The UN delegation visited the cities of Santo Domingo, Santiago, San Pedro de Macoris, and Dajabon and the Haiti border region.

¶3. (U) On October 30, the UN officials issued a preliminary report stating that, while there is no official government policy of discrimination, there is nevertheless a serious problem of racism and discrimination. Other key findings and comments in the report include:

-- "While government representatives almost universally rejected even the possibility of racism in Dominican society, community representatives all spoke emotionally of the reality of racism that they had experienced."

-- "The issue of documentation emerged as a major concern for

Haitian migrants and those Dominicans of Haitian descent.... Many reported that, because of their color or their Haitian looks or name, it is impossible to obtain documents and they are left vulnerable to deportation or expulsion to Haiti, even as Dominican citizens with no connection whatsoever with that country."

-- "WITHOUT EXCEPTION (emphasis added) those Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent that the Experts interviewed spoke of their difficulties in obtaining documents, registering their children or gaining copies of previously issued documents, and their fear that their previous legal status could be revoked. Many commented that (the National Election Board's) 'circular 17' relating to 'suspicious documents' allows low level officials to question or confiscate documents belonging to blacks and those of Haitian descent and that instructions had been given to officials to that effect. Valid identity documents are crucial to accessing a wide variety of rights which many feel are now being arbitrarily withheld from them, such as access to university and the opportunity to find skilled work."

-- "The UN Experts stated that the issue of racism is almost invisible in certain parts of society and in particular amongst elites. They considered that this invisibility may be the reflection or the consequence of several factors: The historical and cultural depth of racism in the whole hemisphere, from slavery and colonization until the present day, the occupation of the Dominican Republic by Haiti, and the centrality of the racial factor during Trujillo's regime."

-- "The Experts recognize the current dilemma of sharing a border with Haiti and noted measures taken by the Dominican authorities in the area of humanitarian assistance including, for example, to provide health care facilities to Haitian migrants."

¶4. (U) The UN officials' preliminary report also included several conclusions and recommendations:

-- "This situation requires urgent attention to ensure that the Dominican Republic conforms with its obligations under international human rights law including the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. As a first vital step (the UN) urged recognition of the reality of racism and discrimination and the expression of a strong political will at the highest level as well as the establishment of a program of action to combat all forms of racism and discrimination in consultation with, and inclusive of, all groups within Dominican society."

-- "The Experts called for a wider and inclusive debate on issues of racism and discrimination within the country."

-- "A cultural and ethical strategy is needed to uproot the very deep structures of discrimination and address the invisibility and silence of minority groups and others facing discrimination. Education is a key component in this long-term project and the media also has an important responsibility. The struggle against racism must be closely linked to building a multi-cultural society based on the principles of democracy, justice, equality and human rights for all."

(The full text of the preliminary report can be found at [http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNews_ByYear_en\)/91FC4E39DEBE9CDCC12573840045D793?OpenDocument .](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNews_ByYear_en)/91FC4E39DEBE9CDCC12573840045D793?OpenDocument .))

¶5. (U) The UN officials will issue their final report at the end of the year and will solicit a formal response from the GODR at that time. Later, the findings and recommendations of the Independent Expert and Special Rapporteur will be presented to a session of the UN Human Rights Council.

REACTIONS

¶6. (C) Foreign Minister Morales Troncoso reaction harshly to the UN report, calling it a "prefabricated montage." Morales also alluded to an unspecified "plot" designed to tarnish the country's image, saying "we know what is behind this." Others also perceived the UN visit as part of plot, including the Senate (which approved a resolution to that effect) and the head of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Lopez Rodriguez. The UN officials reacted with dismay, saying "A statement was made by the bishop (sic) and a resolution by the Senate that accused us of being part of an international plot. We have been in more than 20 countries and no one has spoken of a plot or conspiracy."

¶7. (C) Listin Diario, a center-right, establishment newspaper, called the UN findings an "exquisite joke" and commented on the U.S. history of slavery and racism. (Note: Dominicans often perceive the hand of the U.S., France, and Canada behind any allegations of human rights violations. In addition, one of the UN officials, Gay McDougall, is an American citizen.)

COMMENT

¶8. (C) The findings of the UN Special Rapporteur and Independent Expert closely track not only Post's reporting and annual human right report, but also the personal experiences of Embassy staff (Reftel). We took note of the contrast between FM Morales' harsh public comments and his private meeting with the UN officials, which the officials described as "showing finesse and tact." Clearly a strong defense of the country's human rights record scores political points in this country, and the fact that talk of an international plot sounds very odd to foreign observers seems lost on Dominican leaders.

(U) This report and additional information can be found on Embassy Santo Domingo's SIPRNET site,
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/>
BULLEN